



## A Message From The Secretary

As 2004 has closed, it's a good time to reflect on the many positive actions KDHE employees have taken to make Kansas a better state to live in and work in, and for future generations to experience and enjoy.

This past year KDHE has been recognized nationally in several areas for the work we do each and every day. This recognition points to the extremely dedicated KDHE staff and I sincerely appreciate these efforts and want you to know it does not go unnoticed.

In December, Kansas was ranked near the top in the country for its preparedness for a terrorist attack. According to a Trust for America's Health report that ranks all 50 states, Kansas is significantly more prepared for an attack this year than ever before. In fact, only six states scored higher, and only eight states tied with us, putting Kansas in the top 25-percent in the nation. Earlier in the year, Kansas also assessed the preparedness of local communities to respond to bioterrorism and through a study commissioned by the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD), and prepared by the Kansas Health Institute (KHI), Kansas communities showed significant improvement in its level of preparedness for bioterrorism and other public health emergencies during the first year of significant federal funding (2002-2003).

Kansas also received good news from the annual *America's Health: State Health Rankings*. The state moved up to 16th in the nation this year, from 20th in 2003. Kansas's strengths include a decreasing prevalence of smoking, a high rating for access to adequate prenatal care, a low incidence of infectious disease and a decrease in infant mortality. Many of these issues are tied to the work of KDHE employees whose programs target efforts to improve our state's health.

Our state has also made improvements in air quality and we were recently notified that Kansas is one of 30 states that met the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new health-based standards for fine particle (PM2.5) air quality. Earlier this year, KDHE was notified that Kansas met all six ambient air quality standards. Through the actions of our regulatory program and KDHE staff working with industry to reduce emissions, we are able to achieve the standards set, and are therefore, breathing cleaner air in Kansas.

KDHE was also commended by EPA this year for its work in preparing water quality standard revisions, and EPA approved nearly all of the provisions of the new and revised Kansas water quality standards submitted by our agency. KDHE staff spent many hours and days working to make this happen.

The Kansas Meth Watch Program gained additional national attention this year, and to date more than 20 states plus Canada, as well as the Consumer Health Care Products Association, have adopted it as a model drug prevention program. It has contributed to a 27-percent reduction in methamphetamine (meth) lab seizures in Kansas over the past three years. With staff continuing to work hard to promote the program, Meth Watch will remain a success here and potentially around the world.

Last year, KDHE staff worked to ensure new regulations were put into place to make Kansans safer and healthier. The state adopted regulations to ensure municipal, commercial and industrial facilities take steps to protect sensitive groundwater. After much study and effort, KDHE implemented new immunizations requirements for immunizations for school age entry, ensuring children entering kindergarten are better protected from illnesses including Hepatitis B and Varicella. Overall, Kansas immunization rates improved this year, and additional efforts are underway to ensure this continues. KDHE also adopted new childcare regulations to provide state oversight for drop-in programs.

Without the work of KDHE staff, many of these accomplishments would still be on our 'wish list.' As we gear up for a new year and continue our actions to make Kansans healthier through the new 'HealthyKANSAS: *Taking Steps Together*' initiative, I look forward to seeing just how much we will be able to achieve. While being ranked against other states can cause some anxiousness, I am convinced that we will continue to improve and to be at the top due to your diligence, dedication, and desire to serve Kansans to the best of your ability. It has truly been my pleasure to serve with you another year. Thank you for all that you do.

Be Well !

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "L. Ad", written in a cursive style.